Zp
Box 3
#6

"The Election of Grace,"

FROM THE LIBRARY OF
Rev. William C. White, D. D.

AS SET FORTH IN

The Word of God and the Confession of Faith.

IBR

BY

GEO. D. ARMSTRONG, D. D., LL. D.

TQ
1
Zp
Box 2
no. 18

THE LIBRARY
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
Richmond, Virginia 23227

RICHMOND, VA.:
PRESBYTERIAN COMMITTEE OF PUBLICATION.

COPYRIGHT
BY
JAS. K. HAZEN, *Secretary of Publication.*
1890.

PRINTED BY
WHITTET & SHEPPERSON,
RICHMOND, VA.

"The Election of Grace"

THERE are certain truths concerning God and our relations to him which can be learned by "the light of nature." "The invisible things of God," writes Paul, "from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead." (Rom. i. 20.) In the case of these truths, human reason may be trusted to discriminate between truth and error.

There are other truths for the knowledge of which we are indebted to Revelation alone. We know, and can know, nothing about them but what God has told us in his Word. In the case of these truths the proper province of human reason is simply to interpret the revelation given—to settle the meaning of the Word of God.

The gospel plan of salvation belongs to the class of revealed truths. We can learn nothing of that plan from the study of nature. Human reason has not a word to say in answer to the

great question, "How shall man" (the sinner) "be just with God." (Job ix. 2.) In contrast with this, the Word of God is full of the subject, from the promise recorded in Genesis iii. 15 to the glorious proclamation with which the book of Revelation closes, "The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." (Rev. xxii. 17.) In this whole matter God is our teacher, and it becomes us to enter upon its study with the determination that his Word shall be to us "an end of all strife."

The Gospel.

In the Scriptures the gospel plan of salvation is presented to our faith many times and in many forms, and with various degrees of fulness and particularity; for example—

1. In 1 Timothy i. 15 it is set forth in the words, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." In this statement the points especially emphasized are: (1), That gospel salvation is intended, not for those who are simply poor and unfortunate, but for *sinners*, even such as Saul of Tarsus, with

hands stained with the blood of God's saints; and (2), That the gospel itself is true in every particular, and worthy *the hearty acceptance of all men*, for it is addressed to all.

2. In John iii. 16 our Lord presents it in the words, "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Here the points especially emphasized are: (1), That the gospel plan of salvation *originated in God's love for the world*, our world of sinners, for "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. v. 8); (2), That the one condition upon which the sinner can make this salvation his own *is faith* in "the only begotten Son given for him," *i. e.*, "in Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (1 Cor. ii. 2); (3), That this salvation *is offered of God to all*, "that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

3. In other passages of Scripture the gospel plan of salvation is set forth more fully, with greater particularity, and more theologically in the sense in which theology is the first of the sciences; for example, in 2 Thess. ii. 13, 14: "We are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the

beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth, whereunto he called you by our gospel"; and in Ephesians i. 4–6: "He hath chosen us in him (Christ) before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love, having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace." And Peter addresses his first epistle to the "elect, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." (1 Pet. i. 2.)

In these passages, the points especially emphasized are: (1), That the salvation of the individual sinner originates in a choice, or election, thereto on the part of God; (2), That this election is from "the beginning"—"before the foundation of the world"; (3), That it is an election "to salvation"—"to the adoption of children"—"to holiness"—"to obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ"; and (4), That it is sovereign, "according to the good pleasure of his will," and having for its proximate end, the salvation of the sinner; for its ultimate end, the manifestation of the glory of God.

"The Election of Grace."

1. The statement that the salvation of the individual sinner originates in the choice, or election, of him thereto on the part of God, is in no way inconsistent with our Lord's teaching in John iii. 16, that man's salvation has its fountain-head in the love of God for the world. This choice, or election, is but God's love for the world individualizing itself in the case of a particular sinner. "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you" (John xv. 16), said our Lord to his disciples, and this because, "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you," (vs. 9.) Christ and his apostles frequently speak of the subjects of salvation as "the elect," and "God's elect," *e. g.*, "Shall not God avenge his own *elect*, which cry day and night unto him?" (Luke xviii. 7.) "For the *elect's* sake those days shall be shortened." (Matt. xxiv. 22.) "And they (the angels) shall gather together his *elect* from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." (Matt. xxiv. 31.) "Who shall lay anything to the charge of *God's elect?*" (Rom. viii. 33.) "Put on therefore as the *elect of God*, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering." (Col. iii. 12.) "Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ,

according to the faith of *God's elect*." (Titus i. 1.)

2. God's election of the sinner is an election "unto salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth"—"that we may be holy and without blame before him in love," *i. e.*, in so far as love is concerned—"to the adoption of children," *i. e.*, that adoption in consequence of which "we receive the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself bearing witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God" (Rom. viii. 15, 16)—an election unto "obedience through sanctification of the Spirit."

This truth will enable us to understand Peter's exhortation, "Brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure." (2 Peter i. 10.) "Give diligence in the exercise of the foremen-tioned graces (vs. 5–7). 'To make your calling,' your effectual calling to the faith of Christ, 'and your election,' your eternal election to grace and glory, 'sure,' not in respect to God, whose counsel is in itself sure and stable, but in respect of yourselves, who may best discern the cause by the effect, and so your election by your good works to which you were chosen, and which prove your calling (as being the proper fruits of it—Eph.

iv. 1, 2,), as that doth election, from which it proceeds (Acts xiii. 48; Rom. viii. 30)."—*Pool's Annotations.* If the reader will bear in mind this truth, that the choice, or election, of which the Scriptures so often speak, is an election, first, to Christian holiness, and only after that to heaven; is an election, first, to grace, and only after that to glory; and so is an election, the outworking of which comes under our observation in this present life—many of the difficulties which surround this subject will at once disappear.

3. It is an election "according to the good pleasure of God's will." In this whole matter God acts as a sovereign. Of its practical outcome, the Scriptures tell us, "God worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." (Phil. ii. 13.) When the seventy returned from their first missionary tour, and made report to our Lord, we are told, "In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and revealed them unto babes, even so Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight." (Luke x. 21.)

A sovereign act is not necessarily an arbitrary one, *i. e.*, an act without a good and sufficient reason. It is such only where the sovereign is a

thoughtless tyrant. As God is a sovereign perfect in wisdom, holiness, and love for his creatures, all his acts—and among them, his election of one man to salvation, whilst another is passed by—must be for the best of reasons; though for reasons unknown to us, because he has not seen fit to reveal them. In such circumstances, we are compelled to think of them simply as sovereign acts; and all we can say about them is, they are "according to the good pleasure of his will;" "even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight."

We cannot admit the explanation which has sometimes been offered, that God's election is based upon his foresight of faith and repentance on the part of the sinner, not only because there is no express Scripture authority for such an explanation, but also because such an explanation would necessarily change the whole character of that election. As set forth in Scripture, God's election of a sinner is to a salvation beginning in repentance and faith, alike the gifts of God (see Acts v. 31; and Eph. iii. 8), and to make that repentance and faith the ground of the election would be to make an "effect" its own "cause," and, furthermore, it would reverse the whole order of salvation, making it to begin in

the sinner's choice of Christ, and not Christ's choice of the sinner.

The proximate end of election is the salvation of the sinner; its ultimate end is the manifestation of the glory of God. "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth, whereunto he called you by our gospel," and "God hath chosen you in Christ . . . to the praise of the glory of his grace," are distinct affirmations of Scripture. The Scriptures speak of God's election as "the election of grace" (Rom. xi. 5); and the glorious character of that grace first appears in the holy life of every one of his elect here upon earth; but it shall be seen in its full splendor only when our eyes shall behold its grand result in "the multitude" of the saved "which no man can number, of all nations, and kindred, and people, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands, crying with a loud voice, and saying, Salvation to our God, which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb." (Rev. vii. 9, 10.)

Such is the doctrine of election as clearly set forth in the Word of God. When our Lord preached it in the synagogue at Capernaum (see

John vi. 44, 52), we are told, "Many, therefore, of his disciples, when they had heard this, said This is a hard saying; who can hear it? . . . and from that time went back and walked no more with him." (John vi. 60, 66.) And it should cause us no surprise that it is cavilled at and objected to in our day also. To a brief examination of such of these objections as have been especially dwelt upon in the public discussion of it at the present time, I will now ask the reader's attention.

A Great Mystery.

That there are, and must be, mysteries in theology, dealing as theology does with the nature of God, every thoughtful man is ready to admit. Daniel Webster once said, "A God I could fully comprehend would be to me no God"; and a greater than Daniel Webster had long before written, "Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection? It is high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know?" (Job xi. 7, 8.) In view of this fact, the Scriptures give us a practical rule for the government of our conduct, which must commend itself as just and wise to every thoughtful person, viz., "Secret things be-

long unto the Lord our God; but those things that are revealed belong unto us and our children." (Deut. xxix. 29.)

One of the greatest of these mysteries—a mystery that lies at the root of much that is inexplicable to us in God's plan of salvation—is his permitting the entrance of sin into our world. Of the reasons why God permitted this the Scriptures tell us nothing; and man, when in the pride of his intellect he has sought to construct a satisfactory theodicy, has but "darkened counsel by words without knowledge." (Job xxxviii. 2.) The solemn, terrible fact that sin is in the world we all know but too well, not only from the testimony of the Word of God, but from our own sad experience also. When, thirty-five years ago, our good city of Norfolk was visited by a desolating pestilence, the questions, Whence did this pestilence come? and, How did it gain entrance into our city? interesting as they were in themselves, received but little attention in the presence of the far more important practical questions, How shall we grapple with this pestilence which is upon us? and, Is there a cure for this disease? and, If so, what is that cure? So, in the case under consideration, not the question, Why did God suffer sin to enter into our world? but the other,

Has God provided a way of salvation for the sinner? and, If so, what is that way? is the question of practical importance to us; and this question, blessed be God, is fully answered in the Scriptures; is one of "the things clearly revealed which belong unto us and to our children."

God's "election of grace" contemplates our world as a world into which sin has already entered, and where it is doing its destructive work, and our race as a fallen race, "dead in trespasses and sins." (Eph. ii. 1.) The doctrine of election has nothing directly to do with the entrance of sin into our world; but is, in brief, that, out of this mass of fallen men, helpless in so far as anything they can do is concerned, hopeless, unless the sovereign grace of God interpose, God has chosen "a multitude which no man can number" to "salvation" in the full gospel sense of that word, "that they should be holy and without blame before him in love, having predestinated them to the adoption of children, by Jesus Christ unto himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace." (Eph. i. 4–6.)

Preterition.

The doctrine of preterition, as it is called, embraces these two particulars, viz.: (1), That

God's election unto salvation is of a part only, though it may be a very large part, of the sin-ruined race of men; and (2), That the part not elected, passed by of God, he leaves in the exercise of that freedom which all alike possess, to live a life of sin, and so bring upon themselves "swift destruction."

1. That but a part of our fallen race will be justified of God in the judgment of the great day, is clearly taught in Scripture. "Marvel not at this," saith our Lord, "for the hour is coming in the which all that are in their graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." (John v. 28, 29.) And again, "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all his holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory; and before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats; and he shall set his sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say to them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. Then shall he say also unto

them on the left hand, Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal." (Matt. xxv. 31–34, 41, 46.)

God's election of a sinner, be it remembered, is an election "unto obedience, through sanctification of the Spirit" (1 Pet. i. 2), and so, in its practical outworking, is something which comes within the range of our observation and study here, in the world around us. Now, in the world around us, in this Christian land, we see a multitude of men and women "who, by patient continuance in well-doing, are seeking for glory, and honor, and immortality." (Rom. ii. 7.) "Confessing themselves to be strangers and pilgrims" here, they evidently "desire a better country, that is, a heavenly." (Heb. xi. 13, 16.) Professing faith in "Christ and him crucified," their life bears testimony to the truth of their profession. These are evidently God's elect, who, through sanctification of the Spirit, are being prepared for a "resurrection unto life." Mingled with these, in the same community, sometimes in the same family, are others who "obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness" (Rom. ii. 8); who "walk according to the course of this world, fulfilling the

desires of the flesh and of the mind," having, and professing to have, no faith in Christ, and no hope through him. These cannot be of the number of God's elect, if election be unto salvation in the gospel sense of that term. Their whole life testifies to their preterition just as distinctly as the life of the first-mentioned "makes their election sure."

2. That it will be for their own sins alone that men will be condemned in the judgment of the great day, is the uniform representation of Scripture: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in the body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." (2 Cor. v. 10.) "God will render to every man according to his deeds; to them who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life. But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil; of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile." (Rom. ii. 6–9.) "The dead were judged out of the things written in the books, according to their works." (Rev. xx. 12.) The book of God's remembrance is that out of which

the dead are to be judged; not the book of his decrees.

3. We can conceive of God's election as embracing the whole race of fallen men; and then, as that election is unto "salvation"—"the adoption of children," the doctrine of universal salvation follows—not, simply, as a necessary consequence, but as neither more nor less than a statement of the doctrine of election, in other words; and why certain divines in our day, rejecting, as they confessedly do, the doctrine of preterition, complain of injustice done them when charged with holding the doctrine of universal salvation, is something I cannot understand, unless it be that the election they hold to is something very different from "the election of grace" taught us in Scripture. Nor can I understand what possible advantage would be gained, in a creed or confession of faith, by embracing in that confession a statement of the doctrine of election, and striking out or omitting preterition, if the statement of election be such as Scripture will authorize.

"God Sovereign and Man Free."

It is often objected to the doctrine of God's decrees, especially his decree of election, that it

is in conflict with the teachings of Scripture and experience respecting man's freedom. Is this so?

1. A little reflection will satisfy any thoughtful person that if there be any such conflict as alleged, it must be, not directly with the decree of election, which is but a determination of the divine mind, but with the execution of that decree. God's election of the sinner is unto "salvation," and if there be any conflict with man's freedom it cannot occur until, in the execution of that decree, God begins working in and with man in "working out his salvation;" and here the Scriptures acknowledge no conflict. Paul's exhortation to the Philippians recognizes with equal distinctness God's efficient agency and man's freedom. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God that worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure." (Phil. ii. 12, 13.) According to this representation of Paul, God's efficient agency in the sinner's salvation, instead of interfering in any way with his freedom, furnishes him with the strongest motive to earnest, persistent effort. And to this representation the testimony of Christian experience conforms. There are to-day, in every Christian land, multitudes of God's elect working out their salvation, and their uniform testimony is that, in this

whole matter, God has been from the beginning working effectually in them, and with them; and yet that, in all the work, they have been as thoroughly conscious of freedom, as in any other work of their lives.

2. And this which is true of the execution of God's decree of election is true of the execution of all his decrees, according to the concurrent testimony of Scripture and human experience. Respecting the greatest crime ever committed by human hands—the crucifixion of our Lord Jesus Christ—the Scriptures declare: "Jesus of Nazareth . . . being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye (Jews) have taken, and with wicked hands have crucified and slain." (Acts ii. 23.) And, again: "For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done." (Acts iv. 27, 28.) No one can read the many Old Testament prophecies respecting this matter, beginning with the prophecy expressed in symbol, of Abel's bloody sacrifice which he offered "in faith," and doubt that the Jews, in crucifying our Lord, did but that which God's "hand and coun-

sel determined before to be done." And no one can read the story of our Lord's mockery and crucifixion by the Jews, can hear their cry, "Crucify him, crucify him; his blood be on us and on our children," and doubt that in this whole matter the Jews acted as freely as any other murderers—murderers, who in every civilized community are adjudged to be free, and so fairly responsible for their actions, and therefore worthy of death at the hands of the public executioner.

"ELECT INFANTS DYING IN INFANCY."

"Elect infants, dying in infancy, are regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit, who worketh when, and where, and how he pleaseth. So also are all other elect persons, who are incapable of being outwardly called by the ministry of the word." (*Confession of Faith*, Chap. X., Sec. III.) On the strength of this declaration it has been contended—of late, even by some Presbyterian divines, in their earnest advocacy of confessional revision—that the Confession of Faith teaches, by fair implication, the doctrine of "infant damnation." For this reason I will ask the reader's attention to a more careful examination of the passage than would otherwise seem necessary.

1. The Westminster Confession of Faith is confessedly the most full and logically arranged of all the Confessions of the Reformation; indeed, so thoroughly logical is it in its statements and arrangements, that this has been made the ground of reproach on the part of theologians of other churches. This must be borne in mind in all our attempts to interpret its declarations. Now, the declaration under examination does not occur in Chap. II. of the Confession, which bears the title, "Of God's eternal decrees," and in which the nature and extent of these decrees—the decree of election among them—are fully treated of; but in Chap. X., which bears the title, "Of effectual calling," where the way in which God's elect are saved is treated of; for effectual calling, in the sense of the Confession, "is the first step in the application of redemption to the elect." In the first and second sections of Chap. X. we are told, in substance, that God's elect among adults are saved "through the external call of the Word and the internal call of the Spirit conjoined. But what if God's elect die before they are capable of receiving this external call of the Word? Are they lost? No, says Sec. III., God's elect that die in infancy are regenerated and saved through the internal call of the Spirit, without the intervention

of the Word; and so are all others of the elect who are incapable of receiving such an outward call. Now, observe, there is no such distinction in the minds of the framers of the Confession at this point as elect infants dying in infancy, and non-elect infants dying in infancy. The distinction in their minds is that between elect infants who reach the adult state, who are saved by the Word and Spirit, and elect infants dying in infancy, who are saved by the Spirit apart from the Word.

"This interpretation of the bare text is powerfully supported by the history of the framing of this phrase in the Assembly. The chapter on Effectual Calling in the first form lacked Sec. III., and therefore it was ordered (*Minutes*, p. 134,) that something be expressed in fit place *concerning infants' regeneration in their infancy*. Observe, this is the point in the minds of the Assembly—the regeneration of infants in their infancy. What they wished to do was to show that sections I. and II. did not exclude those who die in infancy from salvation, by asserting that the effectual call came through the Word. It was the possibility aud actuality of regeneration in infancy that they wished to assert, and this, and this only, they do assert—without having in mind anything at all

as to how many of infants dying in infancy are so regenerated, or implying anything at all about this matter, which they would have adjudged a wholly inappropriate subject to broach at this place." (*Prof. Warfield's Confessional Revision*, pp. 55, 56.) Having in mind the thoroughly logical character of the Confession of Faith, Professor Warfield well says: "I think we may characterize the interpretation of Chap. X., Sec. III., which finds a body of non-elect infants dying in infancy implied in its statement, as one of the most astonishing pieces of misrepresentation in literary history."

2. "The Solemn League and Covenant" is one of the most remarkable documents belonging to the history of the Reformation. It was drawn up by Rev. John Craig, a colleague of Knox, and first adopted in 1581, but subsequently renewed in 1638, five years before the Westminster Assembly met. The solemn and affecting scene which attended its renewal in Greyfriars Church, Edinburgh, the reader can find described in every history of Presbyterianism in Scotland. This document consists largely of an emphatic protest against certain errors of the Church of Rome, and among them "*her cruel judgment against infants departing without the sacraments*" (*Creeds of*

Christendom, Vol. III., p. 482.) On this specification Dr. Schaff remarks: "This is the first *confessional* declaration against the damnation and by implication in favor of the salvation of unbaptized infants." (*Creeds of Christendom*, Vol. I., p. 687.)

To understand the full import of this declaration of the Solemn League and Covenant, the reader must bear in mind the fact that all, Romanists and Presbyterians alike, believed in the salvation of baptized infants dying in infancy: Romanists because of their belief in salvation by the sacraments; Presbyterians—restricting baptism, as they did, to the children of believing parents—because such were "children of the covenant"; so that the declaration, "We detest and refuse the cruel judgment of the Church of Rome against infants departing without the sacraments," must be regarded as an emphatic declaration of faith in the salvation of all infants dying in infancy on the part of those who signed that document. That all the Presbyterian divines of that day believed in the salvation of all infants dying in infancy, I do not affirm; but that the great body of Presbyterian people of Scotland did, their signing the Solemn League and Covenant places beyond all reasonable doubt; and further,

that when, a few years later, in 1647, the Church of Scotland adopted the Westminster Confession, they did not understand that Confession, either in Chap. X., Sec. III., or anywhere else, to teach anything at variance with that belief, is also beyond all reasonable doubt.

3. If this be so, the question may be asked, why, then, did they use the expression "elect infants," and not "all infants dying in infancy"? To this it is sufficient to answer, that in so doing they but followed the example of Christ and his apostles, as we have seen, in this section as well as in other parts of the Confession; *e. g.*, "the grace of faith, whereby the *elect* are enabled to believe." (Chap. XIV., Sec. I.) "The catholic or universal church, which is invisible, consists of the whole number of the *elect*." (Chap. XXV., Sec. I.) There was another reason which probably influenced them in this matter, suggested by the quotation from the Solemn League and Covenant made above. The grand controversy of the Presbyterian Church at that day was with the Church of Rome. Both churches taught the doctrine of total depravity; and to those holding that doctrine but two theories of infant salvation are possible: one, adopted by the Church of Rome, salvation by the sacraments; the other.

taught in the Westminster Standards, salvation through the sovereign electing grace of God. It was, I think, to emphasize the fact that, while utterly rejecting the Romish doctrine, they yet believed in infant salvation, that they used the expression "elect infants" in the section under examination.

4. The Westminster Confession became a part of the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, and so binding upon us, not by any action of the Westminster Assembly, but by that of our own General Assembly, which, after carefully revising it and striking out certain portions of the original Confession, passed what is known in history as "the adopting act" in 1788. For us, then, "the historic sense," the sense in which the Confession is binding upon us, is the sense in which our fathers understood it when the adopting act was passed.

How they understood the passage under examination may be learned from such a fact as this: Dr. Charles Hodge, for fifty years a professor in Princeton Theological Seminary, and elected to office by the General Assembly in 1822, but thirty-four years after the adopting act was passed, in his great work on Theology, writes: "It is the general belief of Protestants,

contrary to the doctrine of Romanists and Romanizers, that *all* who die in infancy are saved' (*Hodge's Theology*, Vol. I., p. 27); and again: "We are sorry to see that Dr. Krauth labors to prove that the Westminster Confession teaches that only a part or some of those who die in infancy are saved. This he does by putting his own construction on the language of that Confession. We can only say, we never saw a Calvinistic theologian who held that doctrine." (*Hodge's Theology*, Vol. III., p. 605.)

Do Presbyterian Ministers Preach this Doctrine?

The statement has recently been made, and that publicly, that Presbyterian ministers have ceased to preach the doctrine of election as set forth in these pages; and hence the inference has been drawn that they have ceased to believe it. This may be true of a few who still bear the Presbyterian name; but that it is true of the great body of Presbyterian ministers, North or South, I do not believe. Some show of plausibility is given to the statement quoted above by the fact that few ministers of any denomination preach such "doctrinal sermons" as were often preached fifty years ago—doctrinal sermons which were in

reality but theological lectures, in which certain doctrines were presented simply as parts of a logical system, without any reference to their relation to Christian experience, or the conduct of the Christian life. In this age of active, aggressive Christian effort, this style of doctrinal sermon has naturally fallen into disuse. Ministers now understand better than formerly that the great aim of Christian preaching should be, not to make learned theologians, but intelligent, earnest, active Christian men and women.

The doctrines of personal election and the divine sovereignty, as set forth in such scriptures as: "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you" (John xv. 16); "It is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Phil. ii. 13); "We love him, because he first loved us" (1 John iv. 19); "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power" (Psalm cx. 3); and as embodied in such hymns as that of Dr. Watts—

"Why was I made to hear thy voice,
And enter while there's room;
When thousands make a wretched choice,
And rather starve than come?
'Twas the same love that spread the feast,
That sweetly forced me in;
Else I had still refused to taste,
And perished in my sin."

And that of Bonar—

"Jesus my shepherd is,
'Twas he that loved my soul;
'Twas he that washed me in his blood;
'Twas he that made me whole;
'Twas he that sought the lost,
That found the wandering sheep;
'Twas he that brought me to the fold;
'Tis he that still doth keep."

These doctrines are preached in Presbyterian pulpits as fully and freely, I believe, as they ever were. For one, I can say, take away from me my faith in these doctrines, and I have no gospel to preach to men "dead in trespasses and sins."